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SUBJECT: February 24 MFA Press Briefing: Clinton Visit, DPRK Missile Launch, U.S.-China Defense Cooperation

1. Key points at the February 24 MFA press briefing:

-- Secretary Clinton's first visit to China achieved "positive results." The two sides reaffirmed their desire to "maintain their close dialogue" and will expand areas of common interest in this "new era."

-- China "takes note" of a possible future North Korean missile launch and hopes relevant parties will maintain "peace and stability" on the Peninsula.

-- China "attaches importance" to its cooperation with the United States on defense-related issues and will work to strengthen exchanges and promote bilateral ties in this area.

-- Tibetans have a "good life" and any rumors from the "Dalai clique" of a Tibetan New Year boycott are "doomed to failure." The "Open Tibet" policy has not changed.

Secretary of State Clinton's First Visit to China

12. At the regularly-scheduled February 24 MFA press briefing, new MFA spokesperson Ma Zhaoxu said Secretary Clinton's first visit to China from February 20-22 achieved "positive results" and the two sides reaffirmed their desire to "maintain their close dialogue." Secretary Clinton had "in-depth exchanges" on a "broad range of issues" in meetings with President Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jiabao, State Councilor Dai Bingguo, and FM Yang Jiechi. Ma stated that China and the United States will expand areas of common interest in this "new era."

Possible DPRK Missile Launch

13. In answer to a question on a possible future North Korean missile launch, Ma said China "takes note" of the matter and hopes relevant parties will maintain "peace and stability" on the Peninsula, which is in the "common interest of all parties."

Defense Relations with the United States

14. Ma said China "attaches importance" to its cooperation with the United States on defense-related issues. The PRC will work with the United States to strengthen exchanges and promote bilateral ties in this area.

Tibet, Rumored New Year Boycott, Travel Ban

15. Ma said Tibet enjoys "social stability" and "economic growth," and Tibetans have a "good life." People there are celebrating the Tibetan New Year, he continued. Any rumors from the "Dalai clique" of a New Year boycott are aimed at "destroying stability" in Tibet and are "doomed to failure." As for a ban on journalists traveling to Tibet, Ma stated that the "Open Tibet" policy has not changed. Interested travelers are welcome to apply through "normal

channels."

Zardari's Recent Visit, India-Pakistan

¶16. Ma noted that Pakistani President Zardari visited Hubei and Shanghai from February 20-24. He met with State Councilor Dai Bingguo in Wuhan, visited the Three Gorges Dam, and met with financial, agricultural, and water conservation experts. Ma underscored that Pakistan and India are both important neighbors, and he urged both sides to "properly handle" issues of concern. "Stability" and "peaceful" interaction are in the interest of both countries and in the common interest of the international community, the spokesperson said.

Auction of Chinese Relics in France

¶17. Chinese cultural relics being auctioned off in France should be returned to China to protect the country's cultural heritage, said Ma. The auction of these items "offends the Chinese people," and China has expressed its strong opposition to their sale. In response to reported comments from the artifacts' owner that he would give the items to China if the Chinese Government observed human rights, the spokesperson countered that to "infringe on cultural rights" under the "pretext of human rights" is "ridiculous."

Russian Sinking of Chinese Cargo Ship

¶18. China has expressed "grave concern" to Russia over the Russian

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Navy's sinking of the Chinese cargo ship New Star and is taking the matter "seriously," Ma said. Russia has conveyed regret and condolences and has promised to investigate and report the results to China.

ASEAN Summit in Bangkok

¶19. Questioned about the upcoming ASEAN summit in Bangkok, Ma reaffirmed China "attaches great importance" to the organization. The appointment of a PRC Ambassador to ASEAN in late 2008 is a testament to China's desire to "promote friendly exchanges."

Visits of ROK, Japanese, and Swedish FMs

¶10. South Korean FM Yu Myung-hwan is in Beijing at the invitation of FM Yang from February 24-25 for talks on bilateral relations and issues of "common interest." Japanese FM Hirofumi Nakasone will visit China from February 29-March 1, and Swedish FM Carl Bildt will visit the country from March 1-3. During Bildt's visit, China and Sweden will discuss both bilateral relations and Sino-EU relations, since Sweden will take over the EU presidency later this year.